

A New Utopia: Promoting Dialogue for a Humane and Sustainable Society

The 10th International Conference of the UNESCO And Cardinal Paul Poupard Foundation Chair For Inter-Religious And Inter-Cultural Dialogue invited eminent speakers and students to share their ideas on how we can co-operate as a global family to repair our world and create a truly sustainable environment for each other and the plethora of species that share our planet. A day of deep insight and reflection followed and we are proud to showcase some of our speakers and other contributors in this edition of our journal.

Tushar Gandhi's, 'India of our Nightmare', is a product of his heartfelt keynote address to the 800 attendees, mostly youth, at the conference. As the conscience of our times, Mr. Gandhi presents the hard facts of life for children of daily labourers, rural communities and struggling populations. His first-hand view of the lesser projected India forces us to examine not just national projections of a grand India, but challenges us to examine our lives of privilege juxtaposed with those who are voiceless. He ends with an appeal to the youth to reject this exclusive notion of development and instead dedicate their time and effort to the service of those who need our support. If every Indian shared just a tiny fraction of their resources, we could finally have the free and democratic India that our founding fathers envisioned.

Sumit Mullick in his article, The Big Bang Theory, deftly demonstrates how we are all connected in time and space to the very inception of our Universe. As humans we are not just interconnected with each other through a shared History, but on every level, even molecular. Our destiny is interwoven with the earth, other species and perhaps even other universes.

Challenging the view that globalization leads to greater disparity of wealth, Prof. Nicolas Gravel argues that the opposite is actually true. In *Globalization and Equality Among World Citizens*, he cites evidence based on global export figures and other parameters to demonstrate that the difference in wealth between the richest and poorest sections of society actually reversed post 1994.

Dr. Armida Fernandez brings to our journal her experience as a medical doctor working among the most vulnerable urban communities in need of healthcare. *Sustainability and Healthcare* focuses on SNEHA established in 1999 as a unique programme that supported and enhances the existing state healthcare structure to positively impact mothers and children. SNEHA's success and expansion is proof that their inclusive approach is a sustainable and effective health care model for the marginalized.

Dr. Avinash D'Souza's article, *Digital Hygiene*, rings a cautionary note to the massive dependence on digital devices and activities which dominate modern life. He raises concerns of digital addiction, pornography, dangerous behaviour, loss of family communication and low self-image that are potential challenges.

A dedicated Teach India volunteer, Sidney Gonsalves outlines the importance of this Times of India CSR programme and the joy of sharing one's time in service of others. Mr. Gonsalves not only outlines the programme's working model but enthuses our students that the time to step up and give back is now!

Siddhi Shah makes a fervent pleas for a better world in her article, reminding us that quality of life as important as quantity or material gain. The article exhorts us to put aside our differences and disputes to rebuild a world in which people of all communities adopt a sustainable lifestyle in harmony with each other and society.

Namrata Bhandari opines that its easy to feel hopeless as we are bombarded with news of wars, violence and xenophobia. But she sees hope in growing examples of liberalism, feminism and simple kindness as countries open their borders and hearts to refugees and ordinary people show extraordinary courage. Truly policies, programmes, education and economies based on humanitarianism is the path to a better future.

In the World We Live In: Environmental Degradation and its Consequences, Ayush Vaid and Prathmesh Siroya outline these grave issues that threaten our planet. They highlight the important initiatives and measures that can be undertaken by governments, companies and individuals like us to preserve our home for future generations.

Advocate Giuseppe Musumeci emphasizes the recognition that the Roman Catholic Church, the UNO and several governments now give to depleting resources in the face of rampant consumerism. As terrible environmental and human cost of corporate and individual greed becomes evident, the Holy Father joins the United Nations in encouraging us to consider the impact on vulnerable and rapidly deteriorating populations and species. We need to modify our behaviour and reassess our choices to protect traditional lifestyles, cultures and values which are fast eroding.

Janine Coelho